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M E T H O D I S T S O C I E T Y,

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N E W C A S T L E.

By Alexander Kelham.

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P R E F A C E.

IT is with the greatest affection and concern, we present you with the following pages. It was never in our mind, to publish any thing on the subject now in dispute. The letters which were sent to Mr Grey, were never designed for the *eye of the public*. If it had been supposed, he would have printed them, the subject would have been taken up in a different manner, and the letters made fit for the press. We did not think it necessary to correct, and print them over again, having confidence in those who will read them, that they will not impute the grammatical errors to us.

The arguments on both sides may be gathered as they now stand. Every impartial reader, will be able to judge, on which side the truth lies. We only desire our arguments may be brought to the law, and the testimony; and the reader form his judgment accordingly. If Mr Grey's arguments are tried by the same rule, it will be easy to know their validity.

We have often been represented as enemies to Mr Wesley, and the interests of Methodism. But this charge is exceeding unjust. We declare in the sight of God, and before all the world, that *his memory is*

exceeding dear to us. We are conscious he was much owned of God, and signally blessed to thousands in his labours. But we cannot think Mr Wesley was infallible. The doctrines essential to salvation, he explained and enforced, with great judgment and success; and the discipline he established in his societies, is hardly to be equalled, in any denomination of christians in the world. His plan of changing preachers frequently, has been productive of the happiest effects. But is it reasonable to suppose, that Mr Wesley, amidst so many excellencies, had no infirmities? Shall we consider his determinations as conclusive in every thing, and follow his counsel, without daring to examine by the word of God? Are we enemies to this great apostolical man, because we think he held *some notions* which are not founded on the scriptures; and are not desirous of laying them aside? If we were to take every thing he has said, and maintain it with warmth, against his opponents, we might be justly reproached, as enemies to the character we wish to establish.

Whoever reads what Mr Wesley has published, will easily perceive, he did not always think alike, respecting the church of England. He has said many things more severe of the clergy, than we have done in our letters. But our opponents suppose, he did not speak from conviction, what militates against their sentiments, but from the false representations of preachers, who are affected to the establishment.

The persons, who have heard Mr Wesley's *private sentiments on the subject*, are conscious he spoke from the fulness of his heart. If we could take Mr Wesley for our master in every thing, against that word of our Lord's, "Call no man your master on earth,"

and prefer his writings, in some cases, before the word of God, our brethren would be satisfied. When they wish to maintain their arguments on the subject in dispute, they refer us to the writings of Mr Wesley, and not to the word that shall endure for ever.

While Mr Wesley ruled in our Israel, we thought it our duty, to comply with his will, in many things, not essential to salvation. We did this out of affection to him, as our father in the Gospel. We have now no man among us to take his place, and preside over us as he did. The preachers were subject to him, as their head, under the Lord Jesus; but they will never submit to any man, as they formerly did to him. Our life is quite altered from what it was. We are now to prove all things belonging to Methodism, and hold fast that which is good. Our connection has not reached the perfection which is held out to us in the Gospel. Several things must be removed, and others substituted in their place, to bring about the desired end.

If a few *bigotted persons, who never think for themselves*, respect all this innovation, every sensible man will highly esteem our conduct.

We are not contending for a general separation of the Methodists from the Church, but for every person in our community, to worship God, according to the dictates of his own conscience. If any who are united with us, wish to attend the service of the Church, and receive the Sacraments as they have done before, we have no restraint on them: they are at full liberty to enjoy what privileges they please with us, and go to the Church without opposition. If any person wishes to attend at any Dissenting Chapel, and meet with us as

usual, we give them full liberty to do as they think is right before God. Many in our Societies, cannot go with a peaceable mind to the Church, for the Sacrament. They will either neglect this sacred ordinance, or go from us to the Dissenters. All we contend for, is, that persons of this determination, may have the Sacrament from their own preachers. We dare not lord it over their conscience, and charge them to go to Church: threatening, if they do not, we shall expel them from the connection. It is the cause of Christian liberty, and not the cause of a party we wish to maintain. It is to men of reason, and men of religion, we make our solemn appeal. In this pamphlet, we shall lay before you, the sentiments we hold on the subject before us; and leave it to every man's own judgment to determine, whether we, or our brethren who oppose us, are in the right. We can appeal to the great searcher of hearts, that our design is not to form a party; or stubbornly oppose our friends, who do not think as we do. We are seeking to find out the truth as it is in Jesus; and when we have found it, to embrace it with all our heart and soul.

If we are maintaining the cause of Christ, God will own us; if we are advancing notions of our own, God will frustrate our design. If God be for us, what can be against us? If God be against us, what can avail, if all the world be on our side?

A N

A D D R E S S , &c.

IT is not necessary, to reconsider what our opponents have said, on the subject before us. Those who read the letters, will see Mr Cownley's character justified, from the charges brought against it. They will find his conduct has not been contrary to the scriptures of truth, but highly consistent with what they enjoin. The distinction Mr Grey has made, between preaching the word, and giving the Sacrament; naturally led us to examine the foundation, on which the distinction is built. Whether we have got into a *slough* and bemired ourselves, or have shown the absurdity of our opponent's arguing, is left to the reader to judge. We shall now proceed to the subject itself, and give our sentiments on it, as briefly, as we possibly can.

We believe no man is called to preach the Gospel, but who is truly converted to God. If a man have never such a fair outward character, and be renowned for his morality; if he is not converted; if he does not experience the new birth to righteousness in his own soul; he is not called of God, to preach the Gospel. The articles, homilies, and the whole service of the church, suppose every true Minister, to have redemption in the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins: to have the spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. They suppose he is living by the faith of the Son of God; and walking, as Christ also walked. Persons who offer themselves as Candidates for the ministry, are to have these two qualifications, over and above

above their experience as christians. They are to have gifts to render them capable of explaining, and applying the scriptures. They are, in the second place, to have an inward call from God, to take on them that office. They are to be moved by the Holy Ghost, to preach the word.

The New Testament is express on this subject. After the day of Pentecost, every person who was employed in preaching the word, by the appointment of God, was brought out of darkness into light; was renewed in the spirit of his mind; had Christ in him, the hope of glory; was separated by the Lord Jesus to the work of the Ministry. They had a dispensation of the Gospel committed to them; they were called of God to publish the glad tidings of Salvation; and a dreadful woe was pronounced against them, if they proved unfaithful in their work.

Now, according to the doctrines maintained in the articles and homilies of the Church, and the New Testament, every public sinner, or moral professor, who has not Christ in his heart, the hope of glory, has no right to preach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments.

Without being guilty of passing an uncharitable judgment, is it not evident, that most of the Clergy in these lands, never renounced their sins, and turned sincerely to God? Do not those who are called *moral men*, sit down to the card-table, attend balls and public recreations, and live in strict conformity to the world? If every Minister in the Church, declares to the Bishop he is inwardly moved to his office by the Holy Ghost when he receives ordination; does he not enter upon his work, with a lie on his right hand, if his life is immoral? You are conscious the prospect of a good living moved him to this work, and he was led to speak against his own conscience, to accomplish his end because he could not enter into the Church as a Minister by any other door. When a man enters this way, such sacred work, can you expect he should be owned of God in his labours? Will he cry aloud and spare not while his own sins are manifest to all where he lives? Will he preach the doctrines of Christ, who is

enemy to God himself? Will a man who is only moral in his outward conduct, without true grace in his heart, preach up the necessity of conversion, and the new birth; and direct all who hear him, how they may attain these blessings?

Before we proceed any farther, we beg leave to observe, there are many pious Ministers in the Church, who have come in by the right door, and now preach the truth as it is in Jesus. Being alive to God in their own minds, they press on their hearers, to seek with all their heart, the treasures of the Gospel. Their lives are an ornament to their profession. They glorify God, in their bodies and spirits which are God's. They are instrumental in the hands of God, of plucking many sinners as brands from the burning. The people where they live, are highly favoured of God. Ministers of this description, are much distressed on account of their brethren, who live contrary to the Gospel. They mourn over those Clergymen, who are rebels against God, and enemies to their own souls. They frequently warn and reprove, as occasion offers, their brethren in the Ministry.

The second thing that offers itself to our consideration, is, the doctrines that are preached by the Clergy in the Church. The doctrines maintained in the articles and homilies, show the way of salvation exceeding clearly. Every doctrine, essential to our present and final happiness, is warmly pressed on the consciences of those, who properly consider them. And though there are many things held in the Church as circumstantials, which cannot be reconciled with the Bible, yet since the weightier matters of the Gospel are strictly enforced, it is possible to learn how to serve God acceptably, with reverence and fear, from the Prayer-book. But do the Ministers of the Church, insist on the same doctrines, which are maintained in the articles and homilies? Are the sermons they preach, agreeable to the doctrines they contain? Are the sermons they publish, exactly importing in every thing, with the doctrines established in the Prayer-book? You know, most of the Clergy are not the authors of their own sermons; but do they take care to read no discourses, that militate against the doctrines

doctrines of the Church? Do not many Ministers preach expressly in the pulpit, against what they have read in the desk? When ever a Minister preaches up the dignity of human nature; shews how a man may live according to the word of God, without being born again; cries there is no harm in recreations, which cannot be entered upon to the glory of God; does this man preach the Gospel of Christ? When a Minister cries out against inspiration; against knowing our sins forgiven; and against christian experience, calling these doctrines enthusiasm; does he insist on the same truths he maintained in the reading desk? What is the reason that a Minister one Sunday preaches, and strongly enforces the doctrines which are according to godliness and the next Sunday, preaches expressly against them? Many Ministers in a sermon, contradict themselves, in the face of their congregations.

In the third place, is discipline kept up in the Church and are the Sacraments duly administered? You know many of you, to your inexpressible sorrow, that the present Church, called the Church of England, is like a city broken down, and without walls.

In most places, every person has free access to the Sacrament, without the least interruption. A man may be drunk on a Saturday evening, and act the part of a madman in the place where he lives; and though the Minister knows of it, he gives him, the next day, the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, without reproving him in the least for his conduct. All sorts of persons are drawn to the table of the Lord, without any separation being made when they come there before the Sacrament is administered.

It is not possible to reconcile the conduct of a good man, who preaches the whole council of God, when he gives the Sacrament to men, that he knows are living in gross scandalous sin. Would it not be more for the glory of God, for a minister of this character to repulse sinners in their approach to the table, and determinately refuse to administer to them? if he were expelled from his place in the church, for acting uprightly, God would take care to provide for him. If it be impossible to reconcile the conduct of good men, in giving the Sacrament

sinners

ners, who can reconcile, with the Bible and Prayer-book, the conduct of a Minister, who lives in open rebellion against God, giving the Sacrament to persons who do not believe in him?

If you compare the lives of Ministers and communicants, with the doctrines of the church established by law, you will find they have no right to claim any part of the lot in her. She renounces in her doctrines, every unconverted Minister, and every person that has not been born again, or is not seeking with his whole heart, redemption in the blood of Jesus. She disclaims any right in those who call themselves by her name, and daily oppose her doctrines.

The persons who are called the Church of England in these lands, are in general, living so contrary to the doctrines of the church, that it is amazing, how any person, who compares the lives of the people with the articles and homilies, should stand a moment in doubt to what master they belong. If none can truly and properly be said to belong to the church, but such as have their lives conformed to her rules, where shall we go to find them?

The church, according to her own explication, is a number of faithful people assembled together, where the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered. Now are the people who assemble in the churches in England, faithful servants of God, sitting beneath the pure doctrines of the gospel; and having the sacraments duly administered to them? You know in your own minds, it is quite the reverse. It is not the Prayer-book, that makes us belong to the church, or professing every thing that is held in it. It is not meeting in the buildings which are called churches, and outwardly worshipping God with such as assemble, that constitutes us *true Church of England men*. None are so in the strictest sense of the word, but those who believe, and practise, as the articles and homilies direct. If a number of serious persons meet in a Methodist-chapel, where the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered, they are the true church, according to the doctrines of the church established by law. Wherever such persons assemble, whether

whether in a barn, or in the open air, and have every thing according to the doctrines of the church, there is the church of England, and there is the church of Christ. Now it is not the church, according to the articles and homilies, we wish in any sense to separate from; but from a crowd of all sorts of sinners, who falsely call themselves the church.

If we think the people who are called the church of England, are the true followers of Christ, and have the pure word of God preached among them, why do we build chapels, and have preaching among ourselves? We can only reconcile our conduct in this, by supposing, that many who call themselves members of the established church, are enemies to God, and their own souls. To separate from sinners who profess to belong to the church of England, or persons in that community, who are only nominal christians, is not separating from the church maintained in the articles and homilies, but in the strictest sense of the word, establishing it.

Our opponents suppose, that most of the travelling preachers in our connection, are called of God to preach the Gospel of his Grace.

Mr Grey says in his first letter to Mr Cownley, "we are not in the smallest degree attempting to throw any obstacle in your way, of publishing the glad tidings of salvation, I should certainly incur the displeasure of God, and be justly charged with opposing, God." Now from the authority of the scriptures, and of the prayer book, we believe every man who is called of God to preach the gospel, is also called to do every part of the work of the ministry: where there is none to take a part of the work from him. We mean all who are properly ordained by Mr Wesley, or any other person authorized fully, both by God and man, to engage in every service the gospel requires.

If the heavy charges brought against Mr Cownley for doing what God and his own conscience called him to do at the express desire of the people, is not laying an obstacle in his way of preaching the word of God, we are much mistaken. And those who have laid the obstacle in his way, by their own confession, "incur the displeasure of God, and are justly charged with opposing his

In America and in Scotland, "every *Raw-Lad*," who professes to have a call from God to preach the Gospel, is not admitted to give the Sacraments. There are Elders in every circuit; men approved of God, and acceptable to the people. These Baptize and Administer the Lord's Supper. If the Methodists were to separate from the Church of England, in the sense we contend for, they would become a part of the Church, according to the articles and homilies. And in what ever denomination of christians, the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered, they are a part of the Church we contend for. If we were to have the separation we desire immediately, every preacher would not have power to administer the Sacraments.

The conference would send suitable men into every circuit, properly ordained, to administer the Sacraments, to such persons as desired them at their hands; and the other preachers would help in the Gospel.

When young men, who are deeply serious, and upright in their conduct, offered themselves to help in the Gospel, they would be received, first as local-preachers, and then go out four years on trial, as young men do now, before they could be admitted into full connection. If they were approved by their brethren, after their years of trial were ended, and it was judged necessary, they would be ordained, and sent out as Elders. Many of the preachers might remain several years, before there might be a necessity to ordain them; and others might travel all their lives, with satisfaction to themselves and their brethren, without ever administering the Sacraments.

Our opponents would fain establish as an axiom in divinity, that an unconverted Minister, may corrupt the word of God, but cannot alter the Sacraments. He cannot, it is true, alter the Bread and Wine, which are given to the communicants; but he can render himself unfit for this work, by sinning against God. Are not the Sacraments corrupted, or the design of them perverted, when they are given by men who are forbidden to do any part of the work of the Ministry; and when to persons who have no right to receive them? sinning against God, and living without godly sorrow

for sin, Ministers and Communicants, may so far corrupt the sacred elements, as to eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's Body.

Many of our people read the Bible with Prayer, and now venture to compare our doctrines with the scriptures of truth. By the light which shines upon their mind, they cannot suppose, that our conduct is justifiable before God, in receiving the Sacrament with sinners when they might have it with our own people. They begin to enquire, what is the reason they cannot have the Sacraments from their own preachers? In many places, they have intreated those who watch over them in the Gospel, to give them the sacred symbols of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus; that they may properly show forth his death, till he come. Several of the preachers, who are properly ordained, have yielded to the cries of the people, and given them the desire of their heart. This light spreads. Many of the people cannot go with a good conscience among sinners as they have done. It is not a scrupulous conscience, as many would persuade us; but a conscience enlightened by the word and spirit of God. They are resolved to follow this light, because it comes from, and leads to God. The preachers and people who see things in this light, are determined to plead for the rights of Men; for the rights of Britons; and the rights of Christians. They are resolved to pursue their end, till it be accomplished.

We have many preachers, qualified in every thing but ordination, to give the Sacraments. When they have received this, from the hands of those that are qualified to give it, they will then fill up the circuit to which they are appointed, with great advantage to themselves, and the people.

Our opponents declare, our call is to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God; to pluck sinners as brands from the burning, and lead them to Christ; to direct them how to believe, so as to find acceptance with God; and then press them to holiness and conformity to his will.

They admit, of our receiving into class and baptizing those who are awakened and converted by our preaching.

We may preach to them publicly, and from house to house.

house: we may take almost every step the Bible directs, without giving them offence. Only one thing is necessary, to preserve *the good old plan*, established by Mr Wesley; and that is, when the sinner is awakened and converted to God, instead of his receiving the Sacrament, from the most holy preacher in our connection, he must go once a month, or once a quarter to the Minister of the parish, to receive the Sacrament from him with his neighbours. If the Minister be ever so drunken and wicked himself, and the people come as near to him in sin, as it is possible for parishioners to come to a Minister of this description, the converted man must go without "wrath or doubting," to receive through the hands of this ordained man, a blessing to his soul. If he seem backward to this part of his duty, you are to tell him, Mr Wesley and many of his preachers, renowned for preaching sound doctrine, have declared over and over, that the wickedness of the Minister, does not hinder the blessing. It is almost impossible to write seriously on this subject. Our opponents know that we say upon it is true; and what is worse, they wish to make it appear, that our gracious Redeemer, calls us to act this inconsistent part. They suppose if the separation we plead for takes place, the greatest pillar in Methodism will be removed, and the whole building fall to ruins. If we had not been taught this doctrine, from the moment of our entering the Society, it would have been impossible, to have imposed it upon us.

Mr Cownley, a man truly devoted to God; who has preached the Gospel upwards of fifty years; who has been properly ordained by Mr Wesley; who has been blessed of God, with many seals to his Ministry: this man must refuse the Sacrament to his own children, from whom he has begotten in the Gospel, though they treat him to give it to them with tears; this man, we say, must send them from himself, to a *drunken* priest, who neither fears God, nor regards man, to have the Sacrament "*duly administered* to them." This be not an insult on common sense, letting reason be the Bible alone, we cannot tell what is.

There are several objections, against the separation we plead for. Those that appear the most weighty, shall

now be considered.—It is objected in the first place, that this separation would fill the preachers with pride and self-importance. To wear a gown, a cassock and band, and be called Rev. Sir, would be the way to ruin them.

The preachers in Scotland and America, who are ordained, are a good deal under the necessity of wearing this apparel; but in England, this would not be required. Many of the preachers would not on any account, submit to it. They look on it as the remains of popery and would stand at a vast distance from it. If any of our preachers choose to grace the pulpit this way, would there be any crime in it? We have only twelve pounds in the year, to find us with books and cloaths. Out of this sum we are to give one guinea a year, to what we call, *the preachers-fund*, to prevent our being thrown on a parish, when we can travel no longer. Our people are not able, and if they were able, they are not willing to raise our twelve, to twenty pounds in the year. If we are to purchase, out of our small stipend, a gown, &c. we shall fall short in something more necessary, to fit for society. We cannot suppose, we should be lifted above measure, if our letters were directed, to the Rector; and if some of our acquaintance, honoured with that title on various occasions. Our having tithes, or surplice-fees, to support that character, would be of little advantage.

We apprehend every licensed preacher, may have that title given him, without breaking in upon the right of the Clergy. When we have any particular sermon to preach, and a collection to make, the printers are obliging, as to inform the public, that the Rev. Mr. will preach a sermon at the Methodist-Chapel, &c.

It is objected in the second place, that this separation, would break the plan of itinerancy: we should become distinct congregations, as other Dissenters are.

But this is a great mistake. Most of our Churches are immoveably fixed, on the itinerant plan. Where the houses are not settled on that plan, our people are determined against fixing any preachers in them. The preachers themselves are resolved to continue this plan. In Scotland and America, the plan is continued exactly the same, as it was before they became a separate people.

It is objected in the third place, if we do not break to separate congregations, we shall "*dwindle into dull formality.*" In an answer to a circular letter from Hull was observed, "the three grand causes of our continuing as we are would remain, if we had the separation we desire. Our preachers would insist on the same doctrines; they would exercise the same discipline with improvement. The plan of itinerancy would continue: these, and not our continuing in the church, are under God, the cause of our being different from other Dissenters."

It is farther objected, we were called in the church, and there we ought strictly to abide.

May we not ask, were you awakened and converted to God, by the Ministers of the Church? Were you first brought to seek the Lord, by hearing the Gospel within the walls of the Church? We apprehend most of you know the contrary. You were first awakened and brought to God by hearing the Methodists, in their preaching-houses, or in the open air. Whatever knowledge of God you now are blessed with, you are led to knowledge, the Methodist-preachers were the happy instruments of bringing it to you. If you strengthen your objection, by observing, Mr Wesley and the preachers, were members of the Church of England; we acknowledge they were called so; but how far their preaching in licensed houses and other places, and forming separate societies against the laws of the church, consists with being members of it, we leave you to determine. It is exceeding strange, how men can declare they were called in the Church, when they are assured, all the vital religion they experience, was first brought by them, in our preaching-houses.

A fifth objection informs us, we should lose many of our established friends by it. They are so prejudiced in favour of Mr Wesley and the Church, that they would leave immediately, on our having the privileges we plead for. But would they have any just cause of renouncing the connection on this account? If we were to forbid them going to church, and receiving the sacrament as they are now done, they would then have cause to complain; when we do not lay the least constraint upon them,

nor wish to prevent their serving God as they have done from the beginning, how can we be the cause of their leaving us? We give them the same liberty they ever had, but this will not satisfy them, unless we constrain others to do as they do. This is so contrary to the liberty of conscience which is manifest in England, as to become matter of astonishment to those who venture to think for themselves. If the preachers were to use that prudence which God has given them, very few would leave us in many places. And if several who have been troublers of our Israel for many years were to do it, we cannot see what loss the Society would sustain by their absence. If any left us through want of better information, they would find themselves like Noah's dove; they would have no rest to their soul, 'till they came back to their brethren.

It is objected farther, this separation would greatly injure our congregations. This remains to be proved. In the places where the people are separate in the sense we contend for, the congregations are as good, or better than they formerly were. In most of the large towns where we preach, the people have heard us. Their prejudices are in a great measure removed. They see to their unspeakable sorrow, the lives of many who are teachers in the established Church; and know whether we are right or wrong, many of the Clergy are not in the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. There is no fear of persons hearing the Gospel in these nations, when it is preached in simplicity and godly sincerity.

The objections we have considered above, are the most weighty in the scale of our opponents.

If the candid reader will examine our reply to them, he will be prevented from having his judgment brought over to the appearance of truth. We shall now advance a few arguments, in support of the separation we wish to establish.

We are now in the eye of the law Dissenters. We are licensed to preach, and our chapels are protected by the Acts of Parliament, which tolerate Dissenters. All our preaching, and the meetings we hold, are expressly against the laws of the Church. We have no where to fly to in times of persecution, but to the acts which secure Dissenters. We may call ourselves by what name we please.

done this will not alter our situation. Every person who is acquainted with the laws of our country, knows, that all our meetings might easily be quashed, unless we fly to the only source of relief; i. e. profess ourselves Dissenters, and take the oaths accordingly.

It is necessary to establish the separation we plead for, to bring that order into our connection, which is manifest in the established Church, and among other Dissenters. Do the Ministers of the establishment, send their communicants among the Dissenters, for the Sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus? Or do Dissenters of any denomination, (ourselves excepted) require their members to communicate in the Church? If you search Ecclesiastical History, from the days of the Apostles, you cannot find a people distinguished as we are, who have acted as we do. If there was ever any thing that looked like our conduct, it was of necessity, not of choice.

We are the first that were ever known to steer between the different sects and parties, without being a distinct people professedly: when we are in the sight of the world, as distinct as any other people in the nation. We have now lost our great pilot, and have none in the connection, who can take the helm, and steer as he has done. We are, out of necessity, driven to the partial separation we plead for.

There are thousands in our connection, who never receive the Sacrament any where. There are many in every large town where we preach, that are not connected with, who hear us preach, and would be glad to join with us in that sacred ordinance. It is in vain to strive to persuade them to go to their parish churches. They tell you pointedly, they cannot do it with a good conscience in the sight of God. If you compel them to do it, they leave the connection, and turn Dissenters. Now we must suffer thousands to live in our Societies, in the neglect of a duty, which we think is binding; we must drive them from the connection, among the Dissenters, or take the method we plead for: Let them have the Sacrament from their own preachers.

The preachers in our connection, are much restrained from preaching up the advantages, and necessity of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in the situation we

now

now are in. If we preach up this ordinance with zeal, and insist on our people partaking in it, we must either give them it ourselves, or induce them to leave us. If it be necessary to preach this doctrine, it is necessary to appoint men among us, to administer it to the people.

It appears that our being closely united to the established Church, is founded on reasons not justifiable from the scriptures. It is more honourable to attend service at the Church, than to worship among the Dissenters. It takes away a good deal of the scandal of the cross. It may be advantageous to our business in the world. It may bring us to fill up places in the nation, which may be greatly helpful to our families; that we could not occupy, were we Dissenters of any denomination. Our being connected so closely with the Church, cannot be looked on in any other light, than as specious trimming, between God and the world. We never met with any arguments, for our continuing closely united with the Church, but what are political; or in other words, carnal, and fold under sin.

By the separation we contend for, we should gain many to our Societies; who leave our preaching after they are awakened by it, and go among the Dissenters. Many that are now halting between two, would see our order and stedfastness in the truth, and soon cry out in holy rapture, this people shall be my people, and their God shall be my God. Having all things decently and in order among us, we should be exceeding happy ourselves, and be a proverb of love among our neighbours.

We should conform to the examples given us in the scriptures. Our Lord only gave the bread and the cup to his own disciples.

Judas was not known to be a traitor at that time. When his sin was manifest, he had no more place with the Disciples. The believers in the Acts of the Apostles are said to have all things common with them. They broke bread from house to house, in singleness of heart. No sinners were permitted to have fellowship with them. When Ananias and Sapphira, agreed to lie against the Holy Ghost, they were struck dead by the hand of the Lord, in the presence of his people. The Corinthians had admitted disorder, in administering the Sacrament.

The Apostle reproves them sharply for it. He bids them purge out the corruption which had crept in among them; and directs them how to act in future, to glorify God, both in the church and in the world.

These examples have been copied by christians in succeeding ages. If we follow them, we shall find it much to our present, and final advantage.

There are many passages in the word of God, which expressly require this at our hands. We are charged not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. We are charged not to bid God speed to those, who do not preach and receive the doctrine of the Father and the Son. We are forbid to eat with a man who is called a brother, who is a fornicator, &c. in private, and by parity of reason, not to eat with him at the Lord's Supper.

There are three texts that appear exceeding expressly upon this subject, which we earnestly intreat our readers to ponder in their hearts; and not gloss them over, as they are frequently done, with such comments, as are absurd to every one, who properly attends to the matter of the scriptures—1 Cor. xi chap. from the 28th ver. to the end. 2 Cor. vi. chap. from the 14 ver. to the end. 2 Tim. iii. chap. the first five verses. If the matter of these passages has any meaning, we cannot be justified in communicating with finners; and refusing to give the Sacrament to those, who request it at our hands. The word that shall judge us at the last day, ought to give weight on our minds, these passages, we have just named, should be reduced into practice, as soon as possible.

We shall, in the last place, give you two (out of a multitude of) passages, from the writings of Mr Wesley: both of them written a little before his death. After he had taken notice of there being scarce twenty communicants at the Lord's Table, at Epworth, in Lincolnshire; half of whom came on on his account, he asks, What can be done to remedy this sore evil? I fain would prevent the Members here from leaving the Church. But I cannot do it. As Mr G. is not a pious man, but rather an enemy to piety, who frequently preaches against the truth, and those that hold and love it. I cannot, with all my influence, persuade

" persuade them either to hear him, or attend the Sacrament administered by him. If I cannot carry this point while I live, who can do it when I die? And the case of Epworth is the case of every Church, where the Minister neither loves nor preaches the Gospel. The Methodists will not attend his Ministrations. What then is to be done?"—Last Journal, page 119th.

The following is an extract from "Farther thoughts on a separation from the Church." "The grand argument (which in some particular cases must be acknowledged to have weight) was this: The Minister of the parish where we dwell, neither lives nor preaches the Gospel. He walks in the way to Hell himself, and teaches his flock to do the same. Can you advise the Methodists to attend his preaching? I cannot advise them to it. What can they do on the Lord's-day, suppose no other Church be near? Do you advise them to go to a Dissenting Meeting? Or to meet in our Preaching-house? Where this is really the case, I cannot blame them if they do. Although therefore, I earnestly oppose a general separation of the Methodists from the Church, yet I cannot condemn such a partial separation. I believe to separate thus far from these miserable wretches, who are a scandal to our Church and nation, would be for the honour of the Church, as well as the Glory of God."

Arminian Magazine for April 1790.

The last passage was published about eleven months before his death. What Mr Wesley maintains here, is all the separation we desire. Where the Minister neither preaches nor lives the Gospel, we have authority from him, to separate in the sense we contend for. A man cannot preach and live the Gospel, unless he be truly converted to God himself. Every Minister who neither preaches nor lives the Gospel, we may leave with Mr Wesley's approbation. If there be but few, who preach and live the Gospel, we are only required by him, to attend the Ministrations of men of this character. If this be admitted, shall we not have authority from Mr Wesley, to have preaching and sacraments, according to our own sentiments? This liberty, by the passage we have now been considering, is granted to most of our friends in England and Ireland.

We shall conclude this pamphlet, with a few remarks,
 which we beg the reader to consider.*
 It is probable there are few national Churches, in the
 world, which are more pure in their doctrines, than the
 Church of England. It is almost impossible for a nation-
 al Church, to be free from corruption. Where the
 King is considered as the head, let his life be pious, or
 so immoral, and the Parliament have power to make
 laws of faith, and impose them on the Ministers and
 Clergy; can it be expected, that a Church thus establish-
 ed should be the true Church of Christ? Archbishops,
 Bishops, &c. are not chose by the people, but are placed in
 different stations in the Church, by the civil powers.
 We have infinite cause to bless God for the liberty we
 enjoy. When the time comes, that the conventicle,
 and corporation acts are repealed, every Dissenter
 then have all the liberty he desires. Our situation is
 glorious now, and will be more so, when that period
 commenceth. We can never praise God sufficiently, for
 the advantages which are granted to us. Let us never
 forget to pray for the welfare of our gracious Sovereign,
 and all the royal family; for every member of both the
 Houses of Parliament; and all who are in authority, either
 Church or State. And let us constantly enquire what shall
 render us to the Lord for all his benefits conferred on me.
 In country places where the people have no preaching
 on Sundays, it might be well to advise them, regularly
 to attend the service of the Church; if they cannot hear
 their own preachers in the neighbourhood. When we
 cannot worship publicly as we would, it may be well to
 rest on God in the best manner we can. Our friends in
 such a situation, might have the Sacrament from the
 Minister appointed by conference, if they were persuaded,
 that it would be most for the glory of God.
 If they choose to continue to communicate in the
 Church, no person among us, would dare to impose the
 Sacrament on them.

We

Whoever wishes to see this subject more fully treated, let them read
 the letters of a Dissenting Minister, to the Rev. Mr White. It is im-
 possible to read those letters with an unprejudiced mind, without feeling
 the force of his arguments. They are worthy to be read, by every
 person who wishes to think for himself.

We do not suppose, all who attend service at Church, and receive the Sacrament, contrary to what we think the Bible requires, absolutely sin against God what they do. They have been taught for many years the lawfulness and expediency of receiving the Sacrament in the Church. They go on in the strength of the doctrine they have received, without examining the word of God.

We believe they are mistaken in their zeal for Church, but are not so uncharitable as to suppose, they will be damned on that account. From the light we have, we cannot go as they do; but we dare not lead them to Hell, because they are not of our opinion.

Our opponents are mistaken, when they suppose we want to draw them into our connection, on terms that are strictly sinful; and wish to bring vengeance on their heads by this means. We cannot see as they see, nor can they view things in the light we do. If our intentions are pure, and we are jointly engaged in seeking the good and the right way; we shall be led aright, and find rest to our souls. We might live exceeding peace together, if we could hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of perfectness. We offer our brethren, who are separated from us, the right hand of fellowship, on honourable terms; if they will not unite with us, because we cannot in conscience do as they would have us, we must be separated of necessity, not of choice.

To conclude. If any person stands forth to answer what we have written, entering fairly into the merits of the dispute; and by arguments from reason and scripture maintains the opposite side, we shall let what they add have a proper weight on our minds: and should anything they bring forward require an answer, we will not be backward to stand forth to the help of our cause.

But if any person answers what we maintain, by a word of reproach, instead of arguments founded in reason and in the word of God, we shall not reply to their reproaches, but endeavour to bear them with patience.

We have given our sentiments in this pamphlet, and shall now leave our cause in the hands of our Father and God; humbly intreating his blessing on ourselves, and all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.



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